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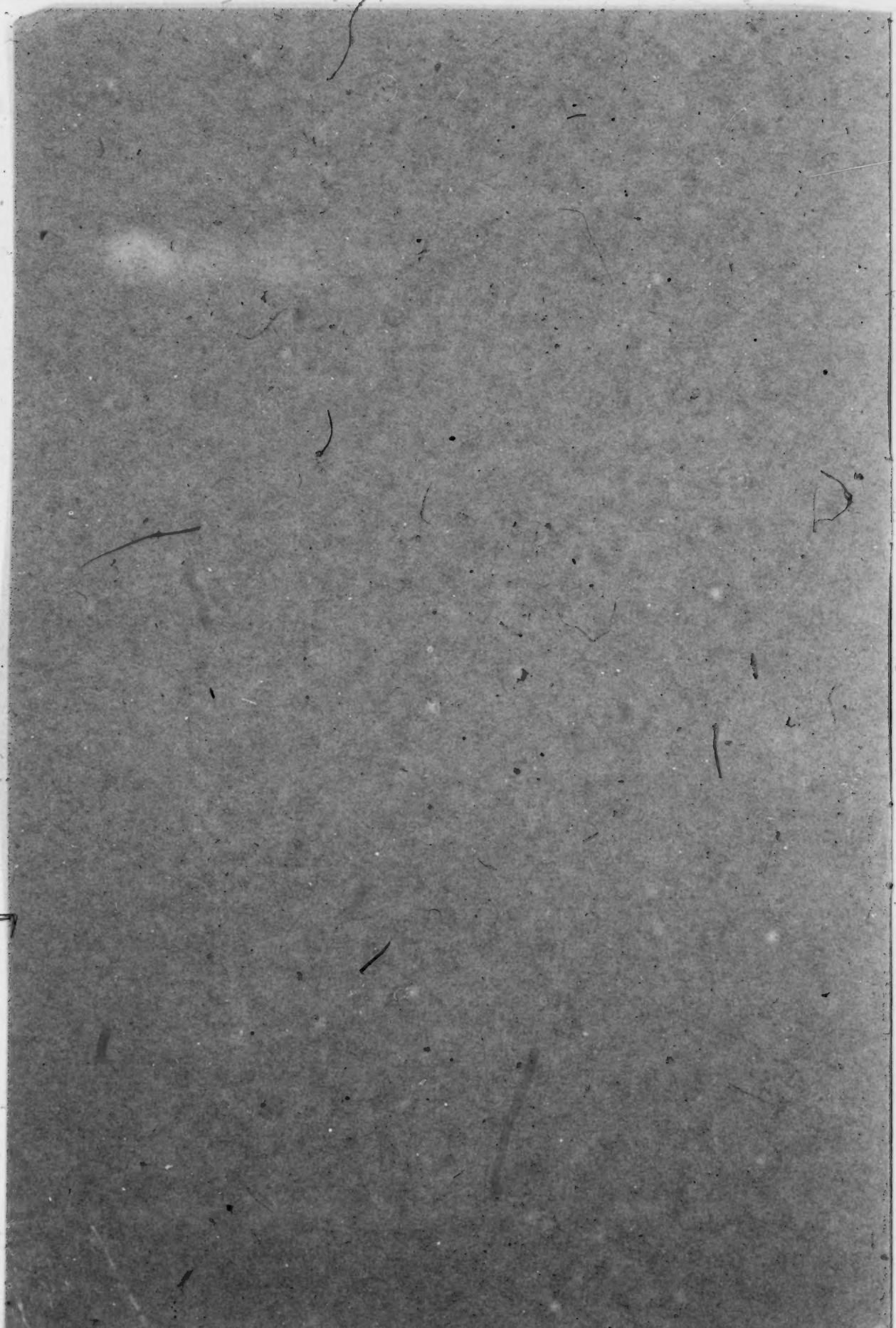
TIRZAH GARWOOD

MEMORIAL EXHIBITION

THE ARTS COUNCIL

7-28 JUNE 1952



FOREWORD

IN April, 1952, a memorial exhibition of the works of Tirzah Garwood was organised by the Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne. This was a fitting tribute, for much of her early life was spent in that town. The Arts Council, in response to a number of requests to bring the exhibition to London, welcomes the opportunity of showing this selection in its own gallery.

The Council is grateful to all the owners who have lent so generously and in particular to Mr. Henry Swanzy, who has contributed more than half of the works exhibited and who has written the introduction to the catalogue. Their thanks are also due to Mr. John Lake, Curator of the Towner Art Gallery, who organised the original exhibition at Eastbourne.

The introduction is taken from an article which appeared in the April issue of the Sussex County Magazine. *The Council is indebted to the Editor for permission to reprint this extract*

P.J.

TIRZAH GARWOOD

EILEEN LUCY GARWOOD was the third child of the late Lieut.-Col. F. S. Garwood, of Upperton, Eastbourne, hence her name, from *Tertia*. When she died in March, 1951, after a long and painful illness, she was not quite forty-three; she had borne three children to one of England's leading watercolourists and designers, Eric Ravilious, whom she met while a student at the Eastbourne School of Art; and she had made a personal contribution as an artist in her own right. A small selection of her work appeared earlier in the year in London, and one painting formed the cover of *The Listener* for 17th January, 1951. This was followed in April, 1952, by a representative display at the Towner Art Gallery.

She was scarcely twenty-one when she sent two wood-cuts to the annual exhibition of the Society of Wood-Engravers. They were good enough to be noticed by the critics of *The Times* and the *New Statesman* with the work of artists already famous, or destined to achieve fame very soon. The cuts were the fruit of work which at the time consisted mainly of satires on middle-class society; shoppers in Kensington, the inmates of hotels, family circles of varying degrees of horror (although her own was happy), a study of Crufts in which animal and human relations were traced with a far from loving hand, a macabre study of a middle-aged woman yawning. The occasional children, on the other hand, were always drawn more kindly. The clarity and the finish of these works were masterful, and she received a number of commissions from patrons who included the B.B.C.

This early success was destined to be her one and only public appearance for many years. She was discouraged by adverse criticism of her imaginative work; and she had married. Occasionally, she helped her husband, as in the decoration of a hotel at Morecambe Bay, and later, with Charlotte Bawden, she revived the craft of marbling paper. She also made about forty-five pencil sketches of her children, and the familiar village scene, of unexampled accuracy and delicacy.

It was only after the death of her husband on active service as a war artist that she slowly resumed more ambitious work, mainly in the form of paper "models" of houses, mounted in frames, which year by year, headed the poll of the exhibitions

organised for children by the movement for Education in Art. Her subjects were first the small farms of Essex, and streets in the market towns. Later, she ranged farther afield, improving her technique all the time, to produce a child actually swinging beside a romantic villa in Walton-on-Naze, or a blue and white house in the Vale of Health, in Hampstead, to which she had moved after her second marriage.

She often said that her last year was the happiest of her life, for then, when she was largely bed-ridden, and often in pain, she was able to concentrate almost exclusively on painting in oil, which she had taken up in 1943. She completed twenty paintings, which form her most considerable work. In them she returned largely to her first love, birds and beasts and flowers, done with affection but without a trace of sentimentality, with the firm hand that could draw a straight line much straighter than many can rule it.

All the subjects needed to be copied; but the copies were related in terms of her imagination. With the flowers she often associated objects of the new and diffident industrial age. Thus, an early Stephenson toy train stands in red and yellow, against the Downs near Lewes, dun and earthy, farmhouse and stacks and fifty individual sheep in the background. There is often a change of scale. Georgian toy horses, very red and white, stand in front of a manger, hanging like a poem by de la Mare in a field of poppies that overtop the roof.

With one exception (*Spanish Lady*), the pictures that she painted show nothing at all of the fear of death, but only this simple delight in the *thing in itself*: flowers from friends, a cluster of marestails, a cinnabar moth and bees, a tortoise and a toad, her cat returning triumphant in the dawn, an early aeroplane (taken from a period Eastbourne post-card) hovering like a mosquito over a lintel of spring flowers.

Tirzah Garwood was a rare spirit, clear, humorous, sometimes cruel, always herself, with a gift of peace unusual in this generation, only achieved by ruthless disciplining of a naturally passionate nature. Her art, limited though it is, is of almost unerring quality.

H.L.V.S.

CATALOGUE

Paintings

Exhibits, other than those marked,
are lent by Henry Swanzy, Esq.

1	Town	*lent by Robert Harling, Esq.*
2	Sleeping Susan	*lent by Mrs. Hepher*
3	Victoria's Doll	*lent by London County Council*
4	Nathaniel and Patsy	*lent by Cambridge County Council*
5	Old Soldier	*lent by Cambridge County Council*
6	Swanzy Family Group of about 1900 (done from an old postcard)	*lent by Mrs. K. T. Swanzy*
7	Canna House	*lent by F. R. S. Yorke, Esq., F.R.I.B.A.*
8	Boats on Cromer Beach	*lent by Mrs. Garwood*
9	Wool Picture	*lent by Mrs. Tuely*
10	Prehistoric Encounter	
11	Ginger Cat	*lent by Miss Dorothy Curtice*

12 Hornet and Wild Rose *lent by the Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne*

13 Orchid Hunters in Brazil *lent by the Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne*

14 Spanish Lady

15 Jenny Unaware

16 Background for Toy Train

17 English Woman (Mrs. Nicholas, of Copford Place, aged 96)

18 The Magnet

19 Etna

20 Wee Wack's Kitten, 1950

21 Suffragette's House

22 Springtime of Flight

23 Hide and Seek, 1948

24 Horses and Trains, 1944

25 Black Beauty

26 The Fall

27 Whither will you wander

28 Olive Swanzy and Agnes Green

29 Erskine returning in the dawn

30 Charlotte's Doll

31 Needlework Picture

32 The Photographer

Models

33 Papermills, Cambridge — *lent by Mrs. Betty Rea*

34 An Essex House — *lent by Mrs. K. T. Swanzy*

35 Villa at Walton-on-Naze

36 Vale Lodge

Wood Engravings

37 The Relations — *lent by Mrs. Newman*

a The Niece

b The Grandmother

c The Sister-in-law

d The Aunt

e The Daughter

f The Sisters

38 *a* Cactus Plants

b Vegetable Garden (1930)

c Nature Study

d Toadstools and Cockroach

39 *a* Alarm

b Yawning

c The Wife

d Winter (1926)

Book Illustrations, etc.

40 Original Paintings for *Black Beauty*

41 Original Drawings for Children's Counting Book *One, Two, Three*

42 Book Covers *lent by The Golden Cockerel Press*

Drawings and Sketches

43 Portrait sketches

44 *a* Cane Chair

b The Wig

c Flower study

d Christmas card (1946) *scraper-board design*

e 'A Bee Washing his Back'

f Christmas card (1947)

45 Studies for Model Houses

46 Coronation Cart, May, 1937

47 Sketch for Snow-woman

Design

48 Screen covered with marbled papers

49 Marbled papers

50 Portrait of Tirzah Garwood *by Mrs. Michael Rothenstein*

51 Tirzah and Eric Ravilious *by Kenneth Rowntree*